

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-44 (Cancelled).

45. (Currently Amended) A method for inserting an intervertebral implant, comprising:
accessing a collapsed spinal disc space;
sequentially inserting and removing a number of implants into the collapsed spinal disc
space, each of said implants providing a different restored disc space height when inserted in the
disc space, the spinal disc space at least partially collapsing when the inserted implant is removed
therefrom; and
leaving in the spinal disc space the implant from the number of implants providing a
restored disc space height corresponding to a desired disc space height to post-operatively
maintain the desired disc space height. The method of claim 44, wherein each implant of the
number of implants has a leading end portion with a nose portion having the same height for each
of the number of implants.

46. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 45, wherein said height of said
nose portions is about 3 to 4 millimeters.

47. (Currently amended) A method for inserting an intervertebral implant, comprising:
accessing a collapsed spinal disc space from an uni-portal approach;
inserting a first implant through the portal into the spinal disc space to provide a restored
disc space height;
removing the inserted first implant from the spinal disc space through the portal such that
the spinal disc space is non-distracted;
selecting an a second implant from a number of implants sequentially implant
subsequently inserted and removed through the portal each providing a restored disc space height
differing from the restored disc space height of the first implant and from one another, the
selected second-implant being the first of said number of implants providing a restored disc space
height that corresponds to a desired disc space height, wherein each implant of the number of
implants has a leading end portion with a nose portion having the same height for each of the
number of implants; and
post-operatively maintaining the desired disc space height with the selected
second implant in the spinal disc space.

Response to Advisory Action and to Final Office Action

Ser. No. 10/790,329

Atty Docket No. 4002-3486/PC746.02

Page 2 of 10

Claims 48-49 (Cancelled)

50. (Previously presented) The method of claim 45, wherein each of the number of implants includes a body with a maximum height between the leading end portion and an opposite trailing end portion, the body tapering from the maximum height to the nose portion at the leading end portion and to a trailing end wall at the trailing end portion.

51. (Previously presented) The method of claim 45, wherein the nose portions of each of the number of implants includes a rounded profile extending between an upper vertebral endplate contacting surface of the implant and an opposite lower vertebral endplate contacting surface of the implant.

52. (Previously presented) The method of claim 51, wherein each implant of the number of implants includes:

a first lateral surface extending between the upper vertebral endplate contacting surface and the lower vertebral endplate contacting surface; and

a second lateral surface opposite of and extending parallel to the first lateral surface and further extending between the upper vertebral endplate contacting surface and the lower vertebral endplate contacting surface.

53. (Previously presented) The method of claim 52, further comprising securing a coupling member in a first notch in the first lateral surface and in a second notch in the second lateral surface in one of the number of implants, wherein the first and second notches open laterally and at a trailing end wall of the one implant.

54. (Previously presented) The method of claim 53, wherein the coupling member comprises a distal portion of an insertion instrument.

55. (Previously presented) The method of claim 53, wherein when secured to the one implant a portion of the coupling member in the first and second notches includes a width that is less than a width between the first and second lateral surfaces of the one implant.

Response to Advisory Action and to Final Office Action

Ser. No. 10/790,329

Atty Docket No. 4002-3486/PC746.02

Page 3 of 10

56. (Previously presented) The method of claim 53, wherein each of the first and second notches includes an indent for receiving a protrusion extending from the coupling member.

57. (Previously presented) The method of claim 52, wherein the upper and lower vertebral endplate contacting surfaces each include a plurality of ridges configured to engage an adjacent endplate of the vertebrae when the implant is positioned in a spinal disc space.

58. (Previously presented) The method of claim 52, wherein the upper and lower vertebral endplate contacting surfaces of each of the number of implants are convexly curved.

Claims 59-60 (Cancelled).

61. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 47~~claim 60, wherein the height of each of the nose portions is about 3 to 4 millimeters.

62. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 47~~claim 60, wherein each of the number of first and second implants includes a body with a maximum height between the leading end portion and an opposite trailing end portion, the body tapering from the maximum height to the leading end portion and to the trailing end portion thereof.

63. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 47~~claim 60, wherein the nose portions of each of the number of first and second implants includes a rounded surface profile extending between an upper vertebral endplate contacting surface of the implant and an opposite lower vertebral endplate contacting surface of the implant.

64. (Currently amended) The method of claim 63, wherein each of the number of implants includes:

a first lateral surface extending between the upper vertebral endplate contacting surface and the lower vertebral endplate contacting surface; and

a second lateral surface opposite of and extending parallel to the first lateral surface and further extending between the upper vertebral endplate contacting surface and the lower vertebral endplate contacting surface.

Response to Advisory Action and to Final Office Action

Ser. No. 10/790,329

Atty Docket No. 4002-3486/PC746.02

Page 4 of 10

65. (Currently amended) The method of claim 64, further comprising securing a coupling member in a first notch in the first lateral surface and in a second notch in the second lateral surface in one of the number of first and second implants before inserting the one of the first and second implant one of the number of implants, wherein the first and second notches open laterally and toward a trailing end wall of the implant.

66. (Previously presented) The method of claim 65, wherein the coupling member comprises a distal portion of an insertion instrument.

67. (Previously presented) The method of claim 65, wherein a portion of the coupling member in the first and second notches includes a width that is less than a width between the first and second lateral surfaces when the coupling member is engaged to the implant.

68. (Currently amended) The method of claim 65, wherein each of the first and second notches includes an indent for receiving a protrusion extending from the coupling member.

69. (Currently amended) The method of claim 63, wherein for each of the first and second number of implants the upper and lower vertebral endplate contacting surfaces include a plurality of ridges configured to engage an adjacent vertebral endplate when the implant is inserted in the spinal disc space.

70. (Currently amended) The method of claim 63, wherein for each of the first and second number of implants the upper and lower vertebral endplate contacting surfaces are convexly curved.

71. (Currently amended) A method for restoring a collapsed spinal disc space, comprising:

providing a number of implants each having a body with a leading end nose defining a leading end height sized for insertion into a collapsed disc space and convexly curved upper and lower surfaces extending from the leading end nose to a trailing end of the body, the convexly curved upper and lower surfaces defining a maximum distraction height, each of the number of implants having the same leading end height and a differing maximum distraction height;

Response to Advisory Action and to Final Office Action

Ser. No. 10/790,329

Atty Docket No. 4002-3486/PC746.02

Page 5 of 10

sequentially inserting and removing at least one of the number of implants into the collapsed spinal disc space, the spinal disc space being at least partially collapsed when each implant is removed; the at least one implant is inserted;
removing the at least one implant from the disc space;
inserting at least one other of the number of implants with a greater distraction height into the collapsed spinal disc space when the at least one implant is removed, the spinal disc space being at least partially collapsed when the at least one implant is removed; and
selecting the implant with the maximum distraction height providing a desired disc space height; and
leaving in the spinal disc space the selected implant ~~first at least one other implant with the distraction height providing a desired disc space height~~ to post-operatively maintain the desired disc space height.

72. (Previously presented) The method of claim 71, wherein the leading end height is about 3 to 4 millimeters.

73. (Currently amended) The method of claim 71, wherein each body ~~the bodies~~ tapers from the maximum height to the leading end height.

74. (Previously presented) The method of claim 71, wherein the leading end nose of each of the implants includes a rounded surface profile extending between the upper and lower surfaces of the body of the implant.

75. (Currently amended) The method of claim 71, wherein the body of each implant includes:

a first lateral surface extending between the upper and lower vertebral surfaces; and
a second lateral surface opposite of and extending parallel to the first lateral surface and further extending between the upper and lower surfaces.

76. (Previously presented) The method of claim 75, further comprising securing a coupling member in a first notch in the first lateral surface and in a second notch in the second lateral surface before inserting the at least one implant, wherein the first and second notches open laterally and at the trailing end of the body of the at least one implant.

Response to Advisory Action and to Final Office Action

Ser. No. 10/790,329

Atty Docket No. 4002-3486/PC746.02

Page 6 of 10

77. (Previously presented) The method of claim 76, wherein the coupling member comprises a distal portion of an insertion instrument.

78. (Previously presented) The method of claim 76, wherein a portion of the coupling member in the first and second notches includes a width that is less than a width between the first and second lateral surfaces when the coupling member is engaged to the at least one implant.

79. (Currently amended) The method of claim 76, wherein each of the first and second notches includes~~include~~ an indent for receiving a portion of the coupling member.

80. (Previously presented) The method of claim 71, wherein the upper and lower surfaces of each of the implants include a plurality of ridges configured to engage an adjacent vertebral endplate when the implant is positioned in the spinal disc space.

Response to Advisory Action and to Final Office Action
Ser. No. 10/790,329
Atty Docket No. 4002-3486/PC746.02
Page 7 of 10